

Mechanical Memories Magazine

ISSUE 43

MARCH 2010



The only UK magazine dedicated to Vintage Penny Slot Machines

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello again, and welcome to issue 43. Well, I can hardly contain my excitement – the sun's shining and there's no snow on the ground! Better still, the central heating's having a rest, albeit probably just for a few hours. So is spring finally here? Let's hope so. Having endured the longest winter for as long as I can remember, it seems incredible that in just over two weeks, Easter will be upon us. I will, of course, be open at Brighton for the school holidays (so long as it's not snowing), so if you can make it down to Brighton, it would be good to see you. If you've never visited Mechanical Memories before, it's really easy to find: we're at beach level, about 50 – 100 yards west of the Palace pier (I've never actually measured the distance – but it's not far)!

Talking of Brighton, the jukebox show takes place on the weekend of 17th and 18th April. It's always good to see some of you down on the seafront after you've visited the show, so if you're planning on travelling to Brighton for the show, do try to get down to see me at Mechanical Memories.

And finally, it looks like this issue will be later than intended (again) – I'm sure you're all used to it by now! Well, bearing in mind I shall be open at Brighton for the first two weeks in April, it is entirely likely that the magazine will be really late next time – so be warned!

Well, that's about it for now.

Till next time,

All the best

Jerry

Front Cover picture, early Gypsy fortune teller at Darren's Candle Workshops penny arcade, Cheshire. See page 10 for Stuart Dale's report on his recent visit.

News and Coming Events

Shire book re-released

Do you remember the little Shire book, 'Amusement machines' by Lynn F. Pearson? Actually, I bet there are many of you who have never seen it, as it's been out of print for many years. It came as quite a surprise to learn that it has just been re-issued, which I think could be good news for the slottie community in general. Whilst it is not an encyclopaedic work, for a little book, it is quite informative and has a good selection of pictures. Now that it will be available at all sorts of tourist venues, it could introduce newcomers to our hobby. It's not expensive, so is likely to be bought by those with a vague interest, whose interest might then develop into something more serious. I will certainly order some to sell at Brighton.

Anyway, if you don't have the original book, I think you'll find it's useful to have, and you can order a copy now from Joyland books (see page 8).

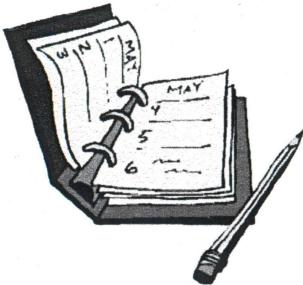
My new Website

You'll remember I set up a website for my Mechanical Memories arcade last year, indeed, I know many of you will have used it to view pictures of the lots in the Coventry auction. Well, after about six months, it's just about finished! I will probably add to it and change things from time to time, but I'm happy with the general layout and content, and I think it looks quite professional. I've also registered a domain name, so it is now:

www.mechanicalmemoriesmuseum.co.uk

One recent addition is a forum. Whilst I hope readers of this magazine will chip-in from time to time, its prime purpose is to encourage interest from visitors to the arcade. I do think we should all do what we can to promote our hobby, and the web seems to be the best medium. There are several links to the pennymachines site and others, so with any luck, once the curious start to explore the various slot-related sites, their 'curious' interest could turn to more 'serious' interest.

Take a look, and let me know what you think. If you want to post in the forum, you will need to become a member (which is quite easy – all you need is a name and an email address). There are already a few topics, mostly started by me, and there is also a 'For Sale and Wanted' forum – all subscribers to the magazine are welcome to post ads.



Dates for your diary

Carters Steam Fair 13th – 28th March
Battersea Park, London

Brighton Jukebox Show 17th & 18th April
Brighton racecourse

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 28th April
Knightsbridge

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 18th May
Knowle

Great Dorset Steam Fair 1st – 5th September
Tarrant Hinton, Dorset

Jukebox Madness Show 25th & 26th September
Kempton Park racecourse

MMM Vintage Slot Collectors' Show & Auction 28th November
Coventry (Provisional)

Bonhams Mechanical Music & Scientific Instruments Sale 7th December
Knowle

Don't forget – if you know of any event which would be of interest to readers of the magazine, please let me know so that I can include details in these pages.

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update March 2010

Much has been happening at Dreamland since my last article. Our new members of staff have hit the ground running. We now have a Project Director, Jonathan Bryant, who is running the entire project on the Trust's behalf. His priority is funding and appointment of contractors. Jan Leandro is Audience Development Officer, and is planning a range of events, including one I will come onto below. Graham Ward, our Project Archivist, is building our collection of Dreamland-related information. We will shortly be announcing a fourth appointment – more next issue on that. BBC Radio Kent broadcast a Dreamland feature on the Breakfast show in February with interviews with Jan and Graham.

Our first event of 2010 is a special screening of cult film Quadrophenia at the Carlton Cinema, Westgate-on-Sea at 1pm on Saturday 3rd April. In addition to the film, there will be a number of guest speakers, including well-known music and fashion journalist Paolo Hewitt on 20th Century youth culture, Quadrophenia's costume stylist and designer Roger K Burton, Thanet District Council's conservation officer Nick Dermott and the Dreamland Trust's Neil Sparkes. There will also be an exhibition of Dreamland memorabilia, called 'I Remember Dreamland', curated by Dreamland Remembered author Nick Evans. And if that wasn't enough, there will be a rare chance to see the Ronnie Lane Mobile Studio in which The Who recorded Quadrophenia. The catalogue of classic recordings created inside this studio is unmatched anywhere in rock and roll! All welcome.

Our new Project Director will be outlining plans to restore Dreamland as 'the world's first heritage amusement park' at a Thanet & East Kent Chamber business breakfast on Wednesday 24th March 2010. With the project already underway following the award last November of £3.7m by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, Jonathan will outline the latest details that promise to give a huge boost to inbound tourism in Thanet. He is, as I am, convinced that the new Dreamland should be run as a business that stands on its own two feet. Local businesses are set to benefit significantly from the increased footfall and raised profile. The Dreamland Wakes Up business breakfast will start at 0730 hrs at the Fayreness Hotel, Kingsgate, near Broadstairs. Tickets cost £12.00 for Chamber members and £15.00 for non-members. Payment is accepted in cash or by cheque on the door. To book a place, email manager@tekco.co.uk with the subject line 'Dreamland Breakfast' and the names of those wishing to attend. Non-members should give full contact details.

Finally, a meeting of the Dreamland Trust board took place on Thursday 11th March. A Project Manager has now been appointed by the Trust to manage the amusement park development, which is a big step forward. The Project Manager will take responsibility for the build programme and for managing all the contractors.

Nick Laister

Chairman, The Dreamland Trust

www.dreamlandmargate.com
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Dreamland
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Presents
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Amusement Machines

by Lynn F Pearson

Penny slot machines are evocative of seaside holidays and Edwardian amusements, although most have now disappeared from the pier arcades into museums or private collections. They were jolly, colourful and inventive examples of craftsmanship and specifically designed to entertain, amuse - and part customers from their money. Gambling machines, which appeared later, introduced Art Deco styling and raised both the stakes and the prizes; pinball machines were ablaze with decoration.

This book tells the story of amusement machines, from the first mutoscopes showing 'What the Butler Saw' and working models raising spectres in the 'Haunted House', to fruit and pinball machines. In between came the vast range of wall machines, which used to line the amusement arcades, many based on the principles of metal balls dropping into winning cups, and of sporting games, from table football to golf machines. The author describes and illustrates the development of amusement machines and lists places where they may be seen today.

The book is being offered by Joyland Books
at a special discounted price of £4.79 (RRP £4.99).
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LYNN E PEARSON

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Number of Pages: 32

Publication Date: 2010

Publisher: Shire Publications Ltd

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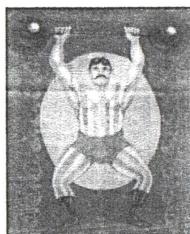


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Victorian 'End of the Pier' Fun

Valentine's Day

By Stuart Dale.

It was the 14th of February, it was Valentine's Day, and it was also to be a busy day for both me and my wife Elaine, and I know what you are thinking: wining, dining, roses & chocolates??? ... Well yes, but first we had to go and collect my latest slot machine from Birkenhead. I have just bought a Crompton's Cheyenne Shoot that I hope will fit in the back of my car, and to make a day of it we planned to visit Darren Hesketh and his vintage penny arcade at the candle workshops in Cheshire. We set off at 9.30 in the morning and as it was a Sunday we made good time on the almost empty motorways arriving in Birkenhead at about 11am. It took only a few minutes to load the machine in to the back of my car and I was right, it did fit with just a quarter of an inch to spare. I paid the chap for my machine and we set off in search of Darren's arcade. I had planned to visit this arcade before but never quite made it, so today would be the perfect time as I was already in the area. The candle workshops are in a very rural setting well off the beaten track but thanks to lots of little brown tourist signs pointing the way it was very easy to find. On arrival the first thing on the agenda was lunch, this was to be found in the chandler's restaurant next to the candle workshops. After lunch we made our way to the Penny Arcade which was inside the candle showrooms at the bottom of a short ramp.

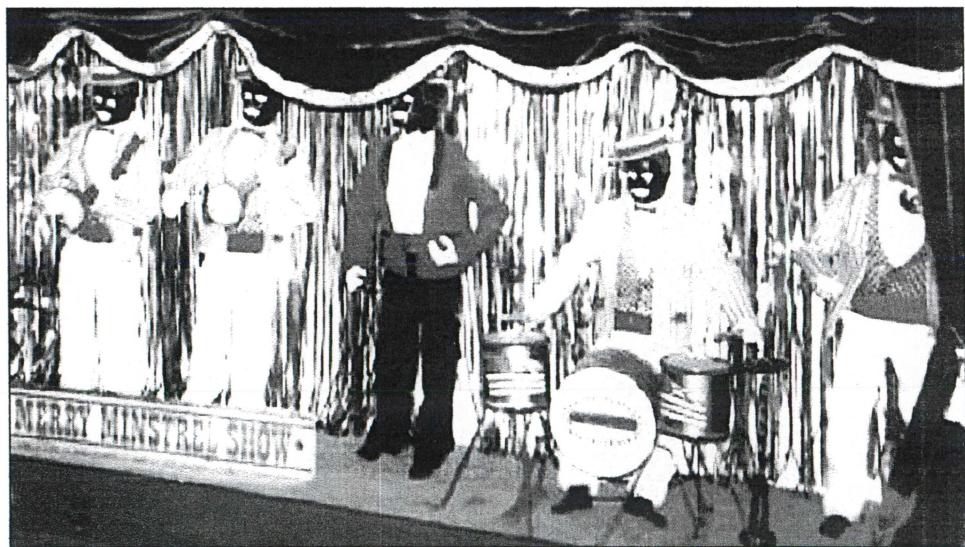


This was the perfect setting for a Victorian penny arcade with its walls of white painted brick and wooden floors. The rooms were lit by rows of coloured 40 watt bulbs which created an atmosphere that took me back to my childhood in the early 1960s when most arcades looked like this. Darren is known for his love of working models, of which a dozen or so fine examples line the walls. My wife can't resist the laughing sailor machine, of which there were two to choose from and also in the corner stood a laughing policeman, who I think was keeping guard on the joke shop counter. The joke shop is also part of Darren's arcade. Darren told me that he had plans in the pipeline to expand the joke shop but this might mean the removal of a couple of machines so as to free up the extra room.



I got myself a tub filled with old pennies from the cash desk and worked my way round the rooms playing each machine in turn. The arcade sported a good selection of wall type machines, all of which were in good working order and never misfired once. It wasn't long before they had taken all my pennies, so another trip to the cash desk was called for. It was then that the fortune telling machine gave me a card that told me today was my lucky day....but I knew that already because even if I was not winning I was happy just playing the machines! I put a penny in a 'band box' type machine that had velvet curtains and five miniature black & white minstrels dressed in striped blazers and playing banjos, drums and a trumpet to a ragtime tune. I wished my grandson Ben had been there, he would have loved this one. Once again my supply of old pennies had been removed from my hands and it was time to think about the journey home. We said our goodbyes to Darren and his machines and made for the door, Elaine couldn't resist buying a scented candle on the way out through the showrooms. We made good time on the return journey but then I always think it seems quicker when you are heading back from a day out, and in case you were wondering, I made sure that later that evening Elaine got the wining, dining, roses & chocolates that she so richly deserved. And on reflection the fortune teller's card was right, it was my lucky day..... after all, I had just spent Valentine's day with my wife.....and my mistresses.

Stuart Dale



Mystery Machine

By Paul Vickers

Has anyone seen a penny machine like this? I purchased this allwin about nine months ago from Northern Ireland, I think the seller was a former arcade operator. I am calling it **Hole in One**. First of all, it is believed to date from the 1920s. Now consider the size, for an early allwin, it's huge! If you think of a Ruffler & Walker type machine or a 24 cup, then that's how big this is. The brass plate on the front says 'Samsons (distributors)' all the fittings are Handan-Ni type, and the case is oak.

Now for the playing part. Bearing in mind the size, it's a one cup game, at the very top of the playfield is the one winning cup. If you miss this (which is most likely), the ball drops further down the playfield and rests on a slope, then with the lever (left of the payout cup) you tap the ball up to a hole, which if caught, you get your penny returned. If you miss, the ball drops into the back.

Why do I call this Hole in One? Well, a couple of reasons: the first is because of the one cup, but the second and most important reason is that on the instruction card (original) it states that you putt the ball (as in golf), rather than drop or knock etc. Also, the small tapper on the playfield resembles a golf club.

This machine has everything, including some nice touches. For example, when you put your penny in, the ball drops onto the top of the hammer box where it stays. By turning the knob on the right-hand side of the door, it releases the ball which runs down ready for play. Huh! Why do that? An extra knob, lever and mechanism for nothing – but a very nice touch (never seen that before). If anyone out there has any ideas on this 'golf' machine, please email me.

Paul Vickers

Paul.vickers@hotmail.co.uk

Editor's note

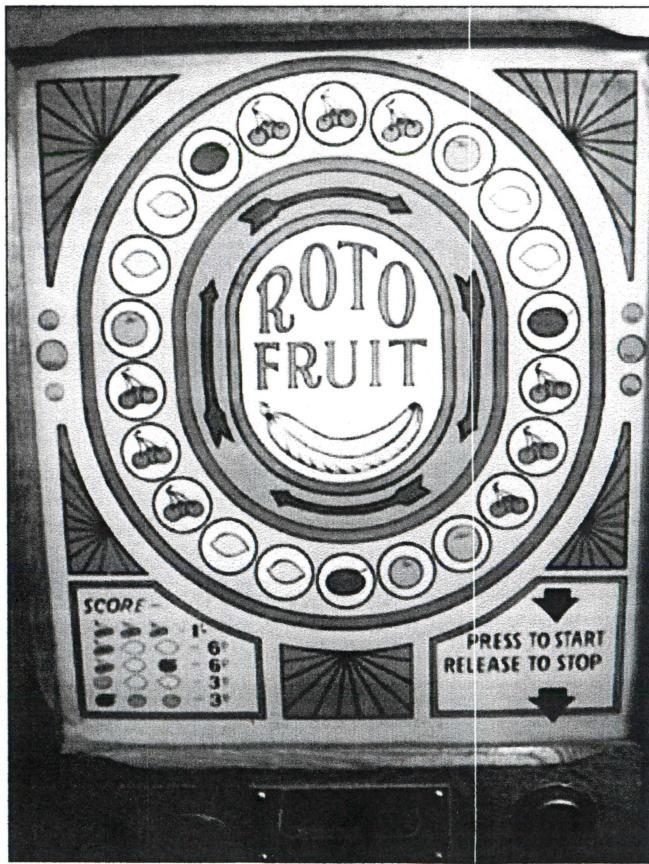
A very interesting machine Paul, thanks for sharing it with us. I shall post a colour picture of the machine in the MMM forum on the pennymachines site. However, there are already some pictures of this machine, somewhere on the site – I just can't find them. So if anyone does, please let me know where they are!



Inside Electro-mech. Part 3

By Robert Rowland

We finish off this series with a look at a 1960s slot called **Rotofruit**. A fair percentage of arcades had one of these, they were superb fun to play and very popular. You would insert a penny, press the round button on the front to set the lights going round, then you would release the button to stop. The aim was to stop the lights on three cherries, which was the highest win, and paid 12d. There were other winning combinations which paid lower prizes of 3d and 6d.



So how does this work? Well, the flashing lights and the payouts are controlled by two uniselectors, A & B. On inserting a penny and pressing the button, blocks of three lights will start to flash in a clockwise direction, controlled by uniselector B. This selector will just keep going round in full cycle until the button is released. By this time, the winner or loser has already been pre-selected by uniselector A, which moves one position each time the machine is played. Remember how in part one of the series, **Twinkle Toes** does the same?

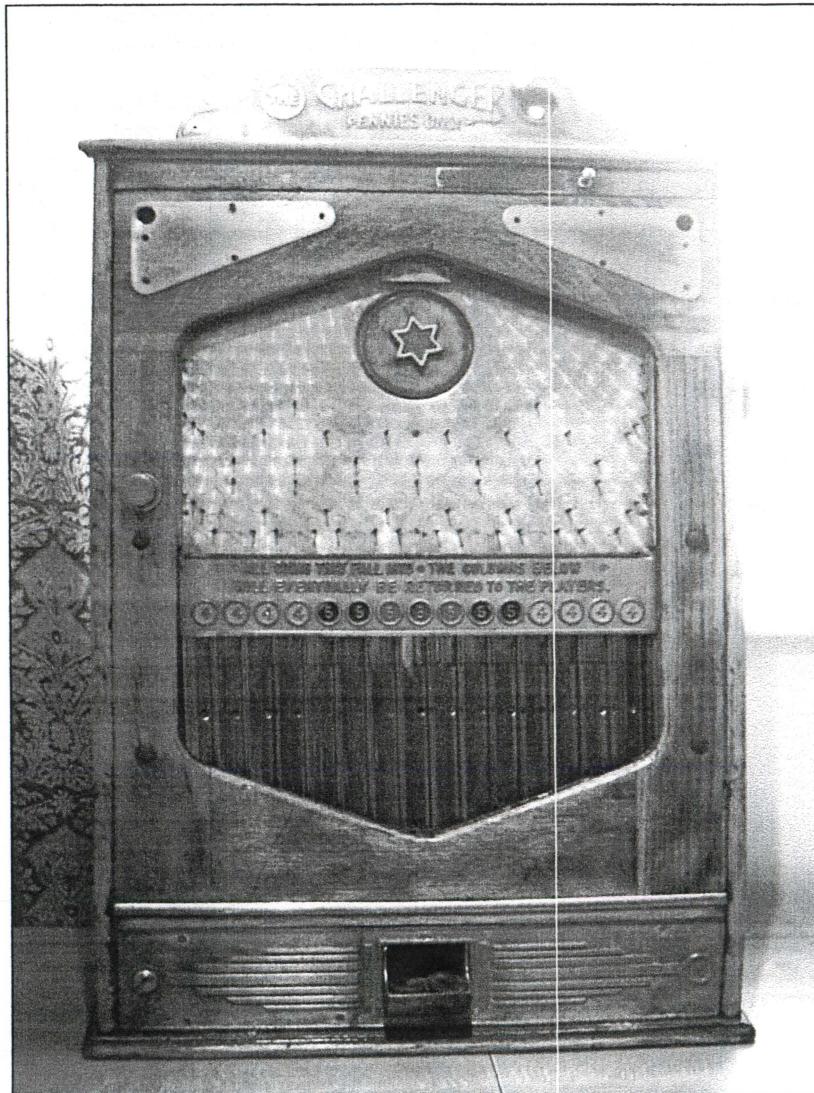
Anyway, I played Rotofruit one hundred times, and here is the outcome: 88 losers, 8 x 3d wins, 2 x 6d win and 2 x 12d wins, so that's a hundred coins in and sixty coins returned. This is a lot more generous than Twinkle Toes, because winners are guaranteed, whereas on Twinkle Toes winners are not guaranteed, as you would have to actually bet on the right colour first to get a winner at all. There's no skill in this; the machine's pre-wired uniselector picks the winner or loser as soon as the start button is pressed. To think now, years ago as kids, when we successfully stopped the fruits on a winning combination, we really believed that we had that 'skill' touch. How disappointing years later to find out that no skill is involved at all. But at least these slots did actually pay out the 12d win, albeit only once every 20+ plays.

I remember back in the 1960s getting the three red cherries and winning the 12d, a bell inside rang and a few seconds later there were twelve pennies in the payout cup. The lights then move off the winning combination, so that no one could claim that the machine hadn't paid out. It was a magical few seconds, you felt utter victory over the machine; you wanted to keep playing it, knowing that you had hit the jackpot once, there seemed no reason why you couldn't do it again. Of course, we all know now that this was never going to happen, it would take another 20+ plays to do it again.

Years later, I now own a **Rotofruit** and its sister machine **Electrodart**. A little of the magic has disappeared, now that I know the truth, but they are still both great machines, certainly a big part of the 1960s amusement arcades. Most readers who were around then will surely remember seeing one or both of these machines in the arcades. Maybe it was all pre-set, but at the time it was magic; times that I will never forget, and wouldn't want to.

I hope that you have all enjoyed this three-part mini series, and that it brought back many happy memories of those wonderful 1960s days.

Robert Rowland



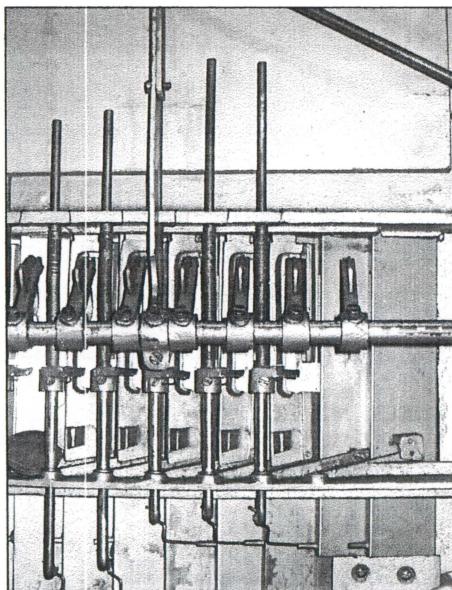
The Challenger

By Peter Gee

This really is a challenge. I purchased a Bradley **Challenger** about eight years ago at an auction and have only now got round to refurbishing it. Having started, I now need help from some enthusiasts who are familiar with this great machine.

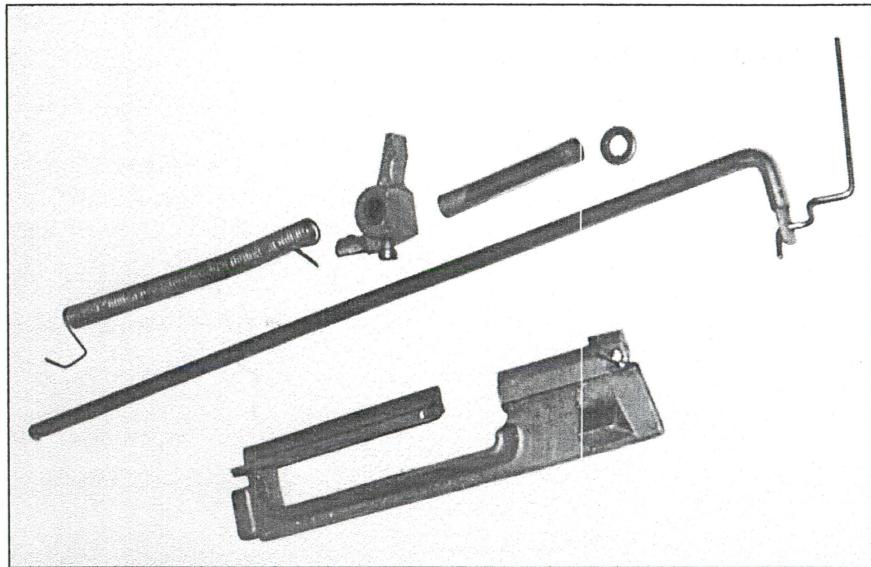
It is a very well thought out machine and is not only intended to provide a degree of skill (although this was not the reality of the situation as the coin went where it wanted) but also a visual indication of what was on offer to win (if only). As with all slot machines, this is very biased towards the operator. Of the fifteen columns which could contain coins – and hence the ability to win – the truth was that only seven of those columns had any real prospect of being topped up – and hence pay out the amount in the filled column. The remaining eight were strategically placed below a set of pins, which made it almost impossible for any coin to arrive in any of those eight slots.

Having now started the refurbishment it was apparent that a previous owner - not being satisfied with his normal return - had taken out the central 6d. mechanism so that any pennies dropping in that particular slot simply went into the cashbox below. In addition to the pieces that are missing in the centre, there are two slots that have a broken payout assembly. I now have the problem of replacing those three important units.



At this point, could I make a plea to the many other collectors who are faced with similar problems as my own? Maybe all the readers of this magazine could send in details of any spares they may have which could then be published as a dedicated 'spares available' page. This could even be supplemented by a 'spares wants' list of particular spares – for while we all have a box of 'bits' they are quite specific to a particular machine. There are of course providers for allwins, but the parts required for the Challenger and many other designs are suitable for no other purpose.

The arrangement of the payout mechanism is shown on the previous page, but as with all things, the devil is in the detail and, so that you can clearly see what parts I am seeking, I have disassembled the parts and shown them as individual components.



While I can, if need be, improvise on the rod, sleeve, washer and spring the cast alloy slot at the bottom of the picture and the lifting mechanism (top centre) are one-off castings which would be very costly to replicate – unless readers know otherwise. I was therefore hoping that if anyone has any such pieces, they could let me, or Jerry at the Magazine, know? I need three if at all possible.

Finally, as all the metal work has been cleaned back to the base metal, I am unsure if any of it was coloured, so if anyone has a 'truly original' Challenger in its manufactured livery I would be pleased to know the colour scheme applied.

Many thanks

Peter Gee

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Also parts for the same, I would consider a spare parts machine.
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Wanted

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Paul.vickers@hotmail.co.uk

Wanted

Mills Vest Pockets,
any model, any condition.

John 0781 301 5932 (W. Mids)
Or email ccfc1968@madasaifish.com

Wanted

Spares for Bradley Challenger payout mechanism (See article on page 18).

Peter 07773 052265
Email saintmalo40@hotmail.co.uk

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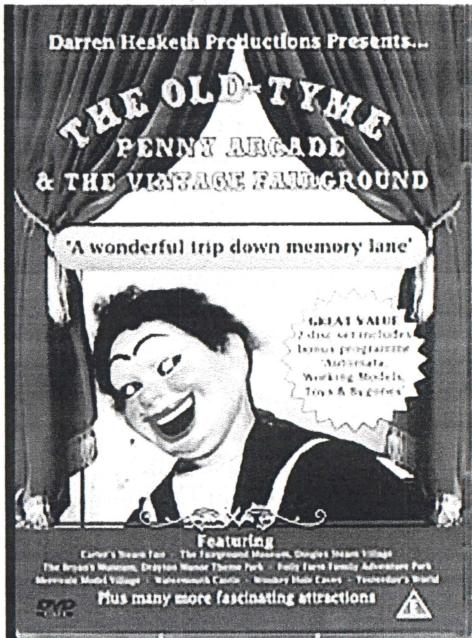
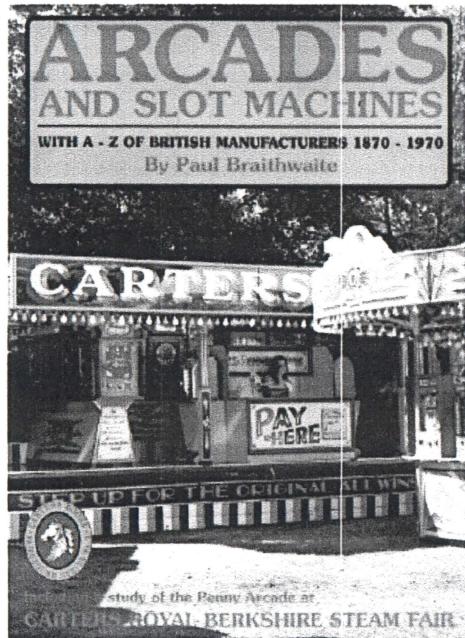
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